

# EMPOWERTEXANS

June 19, 2019

The Honorable Dennis Bonnen  
Texas House of Representatives  
Texas Capitol, 2W.13

*with a copy to:*

The Honorable Dustin Burrows  
Texas House of Representatives  
Texas Capitol, E2.722

*Original copies delivered by FedEx.*

Dear Mr. Bonnen,

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your invitation to meet. While it was a surprise to have Mr. Burrows join us, I welcomed his participation in our meeting.

When you suggested we get together, I expected a plea for GOP unity, or to hear complaints about our session coverage. Or perhaps to hear you try to dissuade me of various views about the session, particularly the failures of Republican leadership to advance Republican priorities. Therefore, I was quite surprised with what actually transpired and have spent several days consulting with my attorneys on how best to respond.

In the meeting, you requested that Empower Texans and our affiliates withhold spending and all other support for political attacks against you, Mr. Burrows, and your allies. You also requested that I consider spending money against several Democrats and a list of House Republicans provided by Mr. Burrows. In exchange, you offered to grant the longstanding (and heretofore denied) applications for *Texas Scorecard* reporters, who operate independently of Empower Texans' affiliated political action committees, to obtain media credentials for the 2021 legislative session.

Though I stated in our meeting that we seek nothing from you, I write now to reassert that I unequivocally reject your offer.

Your unsolicited and unwelcome offer indicates that you may have a false impression of me and Empower Texans, as well as our affiliates and allies. We have not and do not intend to ever seek or accept any *quid pro quo* arrangement with any public official.

As you are aware, obstruction by the chairman of the House Administration Committee of *Texas Scorecard's* applications for media credentials is under litigation and ripe for appeal before the Fifth Circuit in New Orleans. Dismissal of the case by the federal court in Austin contradicts a recent ruling in a suit against the President of the United States involving a CNN reporter.

Whether the chairman of a state legislative committee enjoys greater immunity on this issue than the President of the United States is a question we expect will be of great interest to the federal judiciary, and is likely to attract national attention.

I could never get a straight answer, despite repeated attempts by our attorneys, as to why *Texas Scorecard*'s application for media credentials was being obstructed. Based on the meeting in your office, the answer now seems clear: media passes are considered favors dealt out to organizations that "play ball" with those in power to make such decisions.

To remove any doubt with regard to our refusal of your offer, allow me to state the obvious. I and the organizations I lead will make decisions to engage in whatever actions to support or oppose candidates completely independent of your offer. Our decisions will be based on our announced mission and priorities, again without regard to your offer. We will act in ways we deem to be in the best interest of our organization and the people of Texas, consistent with our principles. All of that will happen without regard to the offer you made.

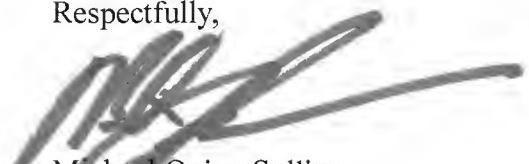
Empower Texans will continue to praise whom we praise, criticize whom we criticize, and participate politically where prudence and interest drive us. Our primary mission is to serve the voting public in Texas. We believe someone is always keeping score in politics; we think it ought to be the taxpayers.

As you will no doubt learn later this week, we will appeal the district court decision relating to *Texas Scorecard*'s applications for media credentials. Also, I will state here that my intention in 2021 is for *Texas Scorecard*'s reporters to once again apply for media credentials in the Texas House. We hope those applications will be accepted—not because of any *quid pro quo* relationship—but consistently with the First Amendment and prudent public policy. If the applications are again denied, delayed, or otherwise obstructed by you or your appointees, we reserve the right to pursue all recourses at our disposal.

Although we disagree strongly with the request made at the meeting last week, and all it implies, I appreciate your continued willingness to serve the people of Texas.

May God bless the Great State of Texas.

Respectfully,



Michael Quinn Sullivan  
CEO, Empower Texans